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CHAPTER III

THE MAGISTERIUM: CONJUNCTIONS AND DISJUNCTIONS IN MODERNITY: A HISTORICAL-SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

STAF HELLEMANS

> The Catholic Church today is in several ways out of phase with the world it wants to speak to. This is particularly the case in the West….The disjunction is very evident in the model of authority which the official Church seems to hold to. – Charles Taylor

As we understand it today, the *magisterium* – the wide range of authoritative teaching activities of bishops and, especially, popes – is largely a 19th century invention, a product of a determined papal policy. Strikingly, particularly for outsiders, the faithful generally heeded the call to obey this authority until the 1950s. An historically singular conjunction of Church hierarchy and the faithful was thus realised. In the second and third parts of this contribution, the emergence of the modern *magisterium* and the reasons why it was established with so much authority in the 19th century will be analysed. Yet, as is well known, after 1960, a deep disjunction became particularly visible when the great majority of the faithful was non-receptive to the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* of 1968. In sections 4 to 6, we will look at the emergence of the disjunction between the Church and the faithful after 1960, at the reasons explaining it, and at a possible way forward. Since the popes are the leading players, this contribution will focus on the papal *magisterium*.

PRELIMINARY ASSUMPTIONS

The authority of the *magisterium* is not a one-way-issue. Since the popes and Rome play the leading roles, it is understandable that they receive most attention. Nevertheless, there are two sides involved: the *magisterium* on the one hand, and the faithful and the public on the other hand. It is thus crucial to study the connections and the interactions between these two sides, namely, how the connections are forged or undone and why. Authority relations change over time and sometimes they change quite drastically. These drastic changes are themselves the result of the processing of the major societal changes to which one is responding. This is also the case for the Catholic Church. After the French Revolution of 1789, society was, notwithstanding the efforts at restoration, geared in new tracks – and so was the Church. After 1960, society was once more reconfigured in ways

that differed so much from the time before that this period is to be considered a new stage in the history of modernity – resulting in a new Catholic Church.[1] I will call the era between the French Revolution and 1960 'the first modernity', and the time after 1960 'the second' or 'advanced modernity'. The invention of the *magisterium* and the tight conjunction between the Church hierarchy and the faithful took place in the first modernity. The disjunction between them occurs in the second modernity.

The teaching authority is linked to other aspects of the Church: to the frame of mind of its leaders, to its internal organisation, to the insertion of the Church in society and in people's daily lives. To understand the issue of the *magisterium*, we thus need to look at the Church in its many dimensions. Let us take the years after 1960. The Catholic Church is getting smaller. It no longer encompasses its faithful 'from cradle to grave'. Dissent and threat of exit by the faithful have become a structural characteristic of church life. Consequently, the connections between the *magisterium* and the public also change. For example, the faithful undergo a change from a deferent to a critical attitude, which precludes the old, mythologised Roman ideal "*Roma locuta, causa finita*" – an ideal that really only applied (with restrictions, of course) to the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the erosion of the closed Catholic subcultures opens up, at the same time, new opportunities, foremost of which is a possible direct appeal to a worldwide public.

CONJUNCTION: THE RISE AND HEIGHT OF THE MAGISTERIUM (1789-1960)

The *magisterium* as we know it today is mainly a 19th century invention.[2] Of course, teaching and preaching were always central to Christianity. The pope and his chancellery – Rome – were key players in Western Christianity from early Christian times, and even more so in later times[3]. However, individual bishops and theologians were also equally active in an independent way until the French Revolution. Pronouncements by popes, often embroiled in political power games, were, at times, heavily criticised. As late as the 18th century, more than half of the German bishops

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[1] S. Hellemans and J. Wissink, eds., *A Catholic Program for Advanced Modernity* (Vienna and Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012).

[2] Yves Congar, "A Semantic History of the Term 'Magisterium,'" in *The Magisterium on Morality*, ed. Charles Curran and R. A. McCormick, vol. 3, Readings in Moral Theology (New York and Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1982a), 297-313; Yves Congar, "A Brief History of the Forms of the Magisterium and Its Relations with Scholars," in *The Magisterium on Morality*, ed. Charles Curran and R. A. McCormick, vol. 3, Readings in Moral Theology (New York and Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1982b), 314-31.

[3] See the Gregorian Reform of the 11th to 13th centuries and the Counterreformation in the 16th and early 17th centuries.

refused to support in their dioceses the papal condemnation of Febronianism in 1764[4]. In the Middle Ages, the theologians of the major universities, in their capacity as experts in doctrine, considered it their duty to judge the orthodoxy of theological teachings. The *magisters* of the University of Paris, the major theological centre of the time, were, until the beginning of the 17th century, pre-eminent.[5] In sum, before modernity, the teaching authority of the Church was scattered over a great many instances, which mirrored the scattered institutional organisation of the Church.

It was only after 1830 that the popes advanced to become the all-important instructors and directors of faith, thereby pushing the other instances into a subservient position. In this respect, and drawing on a long tradition of claims to papal supremacy and on the more recent resurgence of papal power and authority since the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (the restoration of the Papal States and the conclusion of many concordats), the pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831-1846) was decisive. Confronted with the end of the Restoration era (1815-1830) and the rise to power of liberalism in several countries, signalling in his eyes a potential return of the revolutionary period, Gregory XVI pursued a vigorous policy of papal empowerment and unity in the Church. To this end, he multiplied his interventions and concomitant claims to obedience in both theology[6] and in politics.[7] It is in this context that Gregory XVI, according to most scholars[8], introduced into papal declarations the term *magisterium* in the sense we still use it today. The encyclical letter *Commissum divinitus* of 17 May 1835, which again condemned liberalism, states:

> He (=God) who made everything and who governs by a prudent arrangement, wanted order to flourish in His Church. He wanted some people to be in charge and govern and others to be subject and obey. Therefore, the Church has, by its divine institution, the power of the *magisterium* to teach and define matters of

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[4] L.J. Rogier, *De Kerk in Het Tijdperk van Verlichting En Revolutie*, vol. 7, Geschiedenis van de Kerk (Hilversum and Antwerp: Paul Brand, 1974), 103.

[5] J. Gres-Gayer, "The Magisterium of the Faculty of Theology of Paris in the Seventeenth Century," *Theological Studies*, no. 53 (1992): 424-0.

[6] Cf. the condemnations of Lamennais and Hermes.

[7] Cf. the condemnations of liberalism, most famously in the encyclical letter *Mirari Vos* of 1832.

[8] Congar, "A Semantic History of the Term 'Magisterium,'" 307; L. Orsi, "Magisterium: Assent and Dissent," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 477; Anthony J. Figueiredo, *The Magisterium-Theology Relationship: Contemporary Theological Conceptions in the Light of Universal Church Teaching Since 1835 and the Pronouncements of the Bishops of the United States* (Rome: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2001), 168-171.

> faith and morals and to interpret the Holy Scriptures without danger of error (par. 4).[9]

Note that, for Gregory, the notion of *magisterium* was indissolubly linked to the right to govern on the part of the Church hierarchy and the duty of obeisance on the part of the faithful. Teaching was regarded as an integral part of governance. Following a long tradition, he defined, at the same time, that only the Church, and not worldly powers, can legitimately wield the *magisterium*:

> This power of teaching and governing in matters of religion, given by Christ to His Spouse, belongs to the priests and bishops. Christ established this system not only so that the Church would in no way belong to the civil government of the state, but also so that it could be totally free and not subject in the least to any earthly domination. Jesus Christ did not commit the sacred trust of the revealed doctrine to the worldly leaders, but to the apostles and their successors (par. 5).

Though attributing the *magisterium* in these two articles rather generally to "the Church" or "the priests and bishops," he makes clear towards the end of *Commissum Divinitus* that the pope should have the leading role:

> It is Church dogma that the pope, the successor of St. Peter, possesses not only primacy of honour but also primacy of authority and jurisdiction over the whole Church. Accordingly the bishops are subject to him (par. 10).

In short, the basics of the ultramontane thinking with regard to the *magisterium* are here already presented. In the decades afterwards, it will be expanded intellectually and institutionally.

Indeed, starting with Gregory XVI and increasing much more after him, papal pronouncements were made on almost any subject. They were made frequently and the faithful paid great attention to them. As a result of this, and in secondary fashion so to speak, the bishops' teaching authority in their own dioceses was equally and through similar means enhanced: episcopal letters abounded on festive occasions (e.g. Lent or Easter) or as comments on papal pronouncements (e.g. in the wake of *Rerum Novarum* of 1891). A whole 'machinery' was put in place, both theologically and practically, for ensuring that the papal *magisterium* could be exercised on a continuous basis.

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[9] Gregorius XVI, "Commissum Divinitus," 1835, http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16commi.htm.

The authority of the pope to make pronouncements with the right to be obeyed was, first of all, strengthened theologically. Gregory XVI and his successor Pius IX were themselves the great promoters. They consciously took up selected theological ideas, concepts, and distinctions that were rumouring among theologians: the concept of the *magisterium* (see above), the distinction between *ecclesia docens* ('teaching church') and *ecclesia discens* ('learning church'), the distinction between ordinary and extra-ordinary *magisterium* and, most famously, the notion of papal infallibility. The dogma of papal infallibility, which was promulgated at the First Vatican Council in 1870, was very restrictive with regard to its use and was thus considered as constituting a form of the extra-ordinary *magisterium*. Yet, it legitimised the far more important, and far more amply used, ordinary *magisterium*. The encyclicals and other statements by the pope or approved by the pope addressing all the faithful, enjoy the status of the ordinary *magisterium*. Though their theological status ranks lower, they were supposed to be no less obeyed.

Alongside the scope and modalities of the *ecclesia docens*, the question of the reception of the teachings by the faithful also gained more attention in the 19th century. Pope Gregory was content to stress the duty to obey. But as soon as papal pronouncements began to inflate, more precision was needed. In the letter "Tuas Libenter" of 21 December 1863, Pope Pius IX thus demanded the subjection of the theologians – and by extension, of all the faithful – not only to the dogmas of the Church, but also to "decisions pertaining to doctrine which are issued by the Pontifical Congregations".[10] However, Church tradition also acknowledges a more active role of the faithful, expressed in the theological notions *sensus fidei* ('sense of faith') and *sensus fidelium* ('sense of the faithful'). Both notions refer to a sort of spiritual instinct of the faithful in perceiving the religious truths of Christianity. Lacking unequivocal adherence in the past, the sense of the faithful was, among other things, invoked by Pius IX as a ground for the solemn definition and proclamation in 1854 of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.[11] On the other hand – and this was regarded with distrust by many in the hierarchy – John Henry Newman, referring to the passing dominance of Arianism among Roman emperors and bishops in the 4th century, called attention to the *consensus fidelium* ('the agreement of the faithful') as bearer of the true faith in times of "a temporary suspense of the functions of the *Ecclesia docens*".[12]

The publication of encyclical letters, expositions in which the papal views on particular issues were extensively presented, became the prime

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[10] Pius IX, "Tuas Libenter, D 1684," 1863, http://denzinger.patristica.net/.

[11] Ibid., par. 19-22.

[12] John Henry Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine (excerpts)," in *Readings in Church Authority: Gifts and Challenges for Contemporary Catholicism*, ed. G. Mannion et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 294.

medium to instruct the faithful on matters of faith and beyond. Gregory XVI (1831-1846) issued 9 of them, Pius IX (1846-1878) 38, Leo XIII (1878-1903), the most prolific writer of encyclical letters, 86, Pius X (1903-1914) 17, Benedict XV (1914-1922) 12, Pius XI (1922-1939) 31, and Pius XII (1939-1958) 41. Yet, not only encyclicals, but all utterances of the popes were now watched attentively throughout the Catholic world.

In conclusion, we can say that both the practice of the papal teaching authority and the doctrine of the *magisterium* were only fully elaborated in the 19th century. The constellation would remain in place with minor alterations until the death of Pius XII in 1958.

REASONS EXPLAINING THE CONJUNCTION IN THE FIRST MODERNITY

Among scholars, the story just told is, in broad terms, well known – although I did not find much in the way of detailed historical treatments of the rise of the *magisterium.*[13] But how is the rise in the teaching authority of the Church, and in particular of the pope, to be explained? And why did the height of the *magisterium* fall so late in the first modernity? There are, as mentioned in the first section, two sides to the question: first, the rise of the capabilities of and demand for papal interventions and, second, the readiness with which the faithful received papal instructions.

With regard to the first side of the question, the rise in papal teaching authority was part of the much broader rise of the modern papacy as the daily leader of the World Church. At the First Vatican Council, next to papal infallibility, the supreme jurisdictional authority of the pope to govern and discipline the Church was explicitly confirmed. Canon law was further elaborated, trimmed, and restyled towards decision making in Rome, culminating in the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law in 1917.[14] Helped by campaigns in the Catholic press and by mass pilgrimages to Rome, papal devotion by Catholics highly increased. Above all, Rome and the local churches became more tightly linked. At the beginning of the 19th century, the pope only appointed the bishops of the Papal States directly. A century later, almost half of the world episcopate was appointed by the pope.[15] Episcopates founded national colleges in Rome in which talented young priests could internalise the Roman spirit (and build up connections!). The system of nuncios, part papal legates to states and part supervisors of the local churches, was extended. The episcopal chancelleries

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[13] The two short but rich contributions by Congar, written in the 1970s, remain the best historical accounts to date.

[14] R. Metz, "Pouvoir, Centralisation et Droit. La Codification Du Droit de l'Eglise Catholique Au Début Du XXe Siècle," *Archives Des Sciences Sociales Des Religions* 26, no. 1 (1978): 49-64.

[15] W. F. Akveld, *De Romeinse Curie. De Geschiedenis van Het Bestuur van de Wereldkerk* (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 1997), 78-79.

and Roman congregations became more closely connected. The organisation of the Church was thus greatly strengthened. It became a centralised organisation, with a pope at the apex who could reach down via the episcopate and the priests and religious to every Catholic on the ground. Only in the 19th century were the institutional conditions created that allowed the Church, and the pope in particular, to make authoritative pronouncements in an effective way.

At the same time, the demand and drive for doctrinal statements was heightened as a corollary of the transition to a modern society. There are two aspects here. A general reason is that modern society is more complex and that it changes fast. Hence, the necessity or, at least, the urge to make statements on new issues or to specify earlier statements increased greatly. This drive will become all the more urgent after 1960. A more specific facet is that Rome felt that the Church was fatally threatened by a derailing modern society. The statements of the popes exhibit a pervasive sense that they are surrounded by evil forces and grave errors. Let me cite as an example – others could be given – from the key encyclical *Mirari Vos* by Gregory XVI of 15 August 1832:

> Depravity exults; science is impudent; liberty, dissolute. The holiness of the sacred is despised; the majesty of divine worship is not only disapproved by evil men, but defiled and held up to ridicule. Hence sound doctrine is perverted and errors of all kinds spread boldly. The laws of the sacred, the rights, institutions, and discipline – none are safe from the audacity of those speaking evil (par. 5)[16].

The alliance between church and state was indeed broken up. The Papal States would soon disappear as a political entity. Not only politics threatened to move towards independence or even antagonism. Threats were also growing, again in the eyes of the Church, in the realm of science (e.g. Darwinism, historical research of the Bible and of Christianity's history), in the social realm (e.g. the estrangement of parts of the bourgeoisie and of the working classes), in the realm of culture (here, above all, in Romanesque literature and theatre). The Church was thus mobilising its intellectual resources to warn the faithful and to counter what were perceived as lethal threats.

We now turn to the other and more astonishing side of the question: why were the faithful so faithful? What made them agree with and take up the surge in doctrinal papal pronouncements?

The most important explanation, it seems to me, has to do with the rising relevance of the Church for the faithful in the 19th and early 20th centuries: the Church took up, directly and indirectly, more societal

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[16] Gregorius XVI, "Mirari Vos," 1832, http://www.papalencyclicals.-net/Greg16/g16mirar.htm.

functions than ever before in history. This increasing relevance was ideology-driven. Pius X's device of *Instaurare omnia in Christo* ('To restore all things in Christ'), can also be taken to characterize the Church during this whole era. The Church and, in particular, the pope felt they had the duty to direct the faithful in all matters of life, not only in doctrinal and moral matters, but also in cultural and leisure activities, in state and electoral matters, in social and economic issues – hence, the development of the so-called 'social doctrine of the Church'. The result: a never-ending flux of pronouncements. To ensure that these would be more than mere words and to prepare for the eventual re-conquest of modernity, multitudes of associations and organisations were, at the same time, founded in all sectors of life. Most of them, in particular, the more secular ones like political parties or socio-economic organisations, were founded and directed by lay Catholics, but the Church and the clerics were always heavily involved. In fact, they were the true leaders of this Catholic world of organisations and movements. With so many central items of life in modern society shaped directly or indirectly by the Catholic Church, the faithful were inclined to lend a favourable ear to the leaders of their world. After all, the Catholic Church acted as the intermediary through which the legitimate fruits of modernity came within reach of the population at large.

Moreover, the Church still was, as in the past, an institution at the centre of society. Its 'work force' – priests and religious – was far better educated than most of the faithful. They self-assuredly frequented the circles of the political, social, and cultural elite, from the parish to the national level. Church and clerics thus enjoyed a high prestige, which was conducive for a deferent attitude towards their authoritative statements.

Ultramontane mass Catholicism between 1850 and 1960 was thus a time of intense and tight connections between the Church and its faithful. The reasons can be summarised in one sentence: the Church was the leader of a whole world ("l'Eglise, c'est un monde"[17]). And although the tensions were many – between liberal and ultramontane Catholics, between the classes – never before and never after was the conjunction between the Church and the faithful so strong as in the first modernity.

DISJUNCTION IN ADVANCED MODERNITY

This historically extraordinary tight and authoritative conjunction between the papal *magisterium* and the faithful did not last after 1960, although this was not due to a lack of effort on the part of the teaching authorities.

First, the popes and bishops continue to issue statements of all sorts. The popes, in particular, are omnipresent and have become even more visible than they were already. Traditional means of magisterial

[17] Emile Poulat, *L'Eglise, c'est un monde: l'ecclésiosphère* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984).

pronouncements in the form of written declarations (motu proprio, apostolic constitution, encyclical, apostolic letter, apostolic exhortation) remain in use. Let us take again encyclical letters as an example. John XXIII (1958-1963) issued 8 encyclicals, Paul VI (1963-1978) 7, John Paul II (1978-2005) 14, Benedict XVI (2005-2013) 3. Encyclicals still constitute favourite papal teaching instruments, though it is clear that the number of encyclicals issued since John XXIII has declined. In addition to the older forms of written declarations, new forms of papal public utterances have made headway, which more than compensate for the decline of older forms. The popes now appear frequently on television. They travel abroad for pastoral visits and use these occasions to give speeches. They give discourses at weekly general audiences in Rome. They give interviews and publish books. In short, they have become public figures. Every word they utter is screened.

Second, after some hesitation, the teaching authorities demand obedience on the part of the faithful to no less of a degree than in the first modernity. Initially, with the stiffening control in the 1950s in mind, the Second Vatican Council gave more leeway to the faithful and theologians. As well, Paul VI wanted to refrain from excessive centralisation and from all-too-frequent imperative doctrinal declarations. A good example is his *Octogesimo Adveniens* of 14 May 1971, which he deliberately called an apostolic letter and not an encyclical.[18] It is modest in tone. It acknowledges the diversity of situations and leaves the particularities of decision making to the local Christian communities and the conscience of the believer (par. 3-4 and 49-50). At the end, it presents the ideas set forth as "reflections" rather than as authoritative teachings (par. 52). Nevertheless, Paul VI, confronted with growing polarisation and the spiral of radical progressive ideas, did not find a way forward for the *magisterium*. While many major documents saw the light in the 1960s, this almost came to a standstill in the 1970s.[19] More tellingly, Paul VI and the leadership of the Church went on the defensive. A typical example of the new mood is the 'Declaration in defense of Catholic doctrine on the Church against certain errors of the present day', *Mysterium ecclesiae* of June 24, 1973 from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, which was ratified by Paul VI. It condemned radical ecumenist ideas and the questioning of the infallibility of the Church and the *magisterium.*[20] The same Congregation started investigating the work of several leading theologians, among them Hans Küng and Edward

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[18] Paul VI, "Octogesimo Adveniens," 1971, http://www.vatican.va/-holy_father/paul_vi/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-i_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens_en.html.

[19] To be fair, two major documents appeared which were not called encyclicals: the Apostolic Letter *Octogesimo Adveniens* of 1971 and the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of 1975.

[20] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Mysterium Ecclesiae," 1973.

Schillebeeckx. Under John Paul II, the hesitations gave way to a much more active and firm approach. John Paul II resumed the tradition of promulgating encyclicals and he did not hide that they were meant as authoritative teachings.[21] Nor did his other major declarations leave room for ambiguity. The Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* of 22 May 1994, which affirmed the reservation of priestly ordination for men alone, closed by stating, "in order that all doubt may be removed...that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful".[22] Under his prefect Joseph Ratzinger, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith became all the more active: liberation theology was ruled out as a legitimate approach, 'relativistic' theories on religious pluralism were condemned, and a number of individual theologians were notified and/or sanctioned.[23] In sum, the *magisterium* endeavoured, after allowing for a short time greater theological freedom and experiments during and after the Second Vatican Council, to tighten again its grip.

Nevertheless, we are far from a full return to the situation prior to 1960. If one wants to call this period a restoration, it is certainly only a partial restoration for which I can only give some tentative indications – the subject needs more thorough research. It seems to me that the rate and the scope of the major doctrinal statements have declined. Before 1960, the popes issued more encyclicals, with Leo XIII and Pius XII contributing the most (cf. supra), and did so on a greater variety of subjects. The documents entailed more prescriptions and condemnations. The popes treated the subjects with more self-assurance and with more precision than is generally the case nowadays. Prescribing a specific philosophical school (neo-Thomism) or a particular political strategy (the *ralliement* of Catholics to the French Republic in 1892), as Leo XIII did, is indeed past history. By the way, the protests against and the failure of the *ralliement* policy show that there were limits to the *magisterium* too, prior to 1960. To come back to the time after 1960, the tone of the magisterial documents has changed as well. The phrasing is less harsh [24] and the style is, by and large, less imperative. The encyclicals strive especially to come across as spiritual documents.[25]

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[21] See, for example John Paul II, "Veritatis Splendor," 1993, par. 26-27 and 114-116, http: www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_en.html.

[22] John Paul II, "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis," 1984, http://www.vatican.va/-/holy-father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp- ii_apl_22051994_ordinatio-sacerdotalis_en.html.

[23] On the tense relations between Rome and prominent theologians, see a.o. Michael J. Lacey and Francis Oakley, *The Crisis of Authority in Catholic Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Richard R. Gaillardetz, *When the Magisterium Intervenes: The Magisterium and Theologians in Today's Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012).

[24] Compare with Gregorius XVI, "Mirari Vos."

[25] The three encyclicals of Benedict XVI are fine examples.

Moreover, though supervision has again increased, this in no way amounts to the hunt scenes provoked by the condemnation of 'modernism' by Pius X at the beginning of the 20th century, or to the systematic disciplining of theologians under Pius XII. Decisive for the fundamental change, however, is a third factor: the reception of the *magisterium* by the faithful. Let us now turn to this side of the coin.

Before 1960, papal pronouncements were often hailed by the Catholic faithful as major landmarks on the way towards a Catholic society. After the publication of Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of 4 August 1879, universities such as Louvain (Belgium) and Laval (Québec, Canada) hastened themselves to offer the Pope their support in fostering neo-Thomism (while the tensions were kept secret!). In Louvain, a centre of international renown headed by the future Cardinal Mercier was set up in the following years.[26] In time, the seminary education all over the world became neo-Thomist. The encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 and the sequel *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931 had a similar lasting impact: the sprawling Catholic social movements, foremost the Catholic labour movements, referred to these encyclicals as their 'Magna Charta'. The contrast with our time is striking. The recent social encyclicals, for example, the 2009 *Caritas in Veritate* of Benedict XVI, received some press reactions, but all-in-all reaction is limited. What is more, they faded away in a murmur without any visible impact. The last enthusiast reception of an encyclical is, I think, Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* of 1967. The publication of *Humanae Vitae* a year later garnered few approvals and loads of disapprovals. When, thereafter, a lively discussion over a magisterial document erupts, it usually means that it is strongly criticised. A good example is the flood of negative press over the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* of 1994[27] or over the Declaration from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Dominus Iesus* of 2000.[28]

This leads us to the question: why this fundamental change? Why did the faithful react so eagerly or, at least, so respectfully before 1960 and why does this change in 1968 and onwards? I see three major shifts in the connections that link the Church and the faithful. Since these shifts are structural, a future restoration of authoritative bonds of the pre-1960-type is highly unlikely.

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[26] See L. De Raeymaker, "Les Origines de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de Louvain," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, no. 49 (1951): 505-633 for Louvain.

[27] On the reactions in Belgium, see A. Van Meerbeeck and A. Verlinden, "De Juni-Storm. Een Sociologische Doorlichting van Enkele Reacties Na Het Verschijnen van Ordinatio Sacerdotalis," *Tijdschrift Voor Sociologie* 16, no. 1 (1995): 5-29.

[28] D. Contreras, "Coverage of Complex Theoretical Content. The Case of 'Dominus Iesus,'" *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2007): 26-46.

First, the Church has become less relevant for the daily lives of people. While the 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a rise in the functions the Church was directly and indirectly performing, most of these newly accrued functions were lost again after 1960. The Church is no longer the central wielding power of an extended Catholic world, pillar, or subculture. It is no longer considered by most people to be a guiding force in their handling of political, social, and cultural affairs. Even the Church's rulings on personal moral issues like contraception, divorce, and homosexuality, to which the Church attaches considerable importance, are ignored or openly defied. The Church has become confined, more or less, to its religious sphere. The loss of functions (on the political, socio-economic, cultural, and even moral levels) leaves the Church only with religious binding potential.

Second – and this is by far worse – there is an unmistakable loss in religious guidance potential too. The Church has become less able to sensitise people for the world of God. This constitutes the real crisis of the Church. Many people have left the Church without feeling that they have lost something valuable in doing so! Moreover, Catholics themselves are generally less surrounded by what I will call 'a religious offer' connected to the Church. Between 1850 and 1960, things like Catholic literature, daily prayers, fasting, devotional sodalities, dedication to a saint to which one felt particularly connected, the yearly celebration of the great religious feasts as markers of the calendar, the religious inner decoration of one's house, among many other things, made the Church religiously all-present to the believer. This is no longer the case. Of course, all things temporal have a temporary character. The problem nowadays, however, is the absence of new forms of religious offer with a similar impact on the daily lives of Catholics.

Last but not least, there is a third structural factor behind the changing bonds between the Church and its following: people now choose to remain or become Catholic and they also choose to what extent and in what form they are Catholic. The result is a complete power reversal: the faithful are no longer subject to the hierarchy; instead, the hierarchy has to prove useful in helping realise the religious longings of the people. Consequently, the faithful do not feel themselves bound by Church pronouncements. Nowadays, people in general, and no less so Catholics, feel free to judge the Church's pronouncements according to their own value system. With less enforcement power, the Catholic Church has to learn how to propose, and how to seduce people with an interesting offer and an appealing teaching.

Due to these structural shifts, which, in turn, are linked to structural changes in advanced modernity, the singular conjunction of the Church and the faithful present in the 19th and early 20th centuries has thus turned into a lasting disjunction. Accordingly, the Church hierarchy has lost the power it had built up in the 19th century to enforce its rulings and it has lost the authority of having the unquestionable right to be obeyed. Although successive popes and the Church hierarchy after 1967 have heightened the

pressure to uphold the former teacher-learner relationship, this has resulted not in more commitment, but, on the contrary, in more resistance and alienation on the part of the faithful and the public.

CONJUNCTIONS AND DISJUNCTIONS

So far, we talked about the conjunction after 1800 and the disjunction after 1960 in the singular. However, they are both the end result of the presence or absence of a number of connections and, moreover, of different types of connections between the Church and the faithful. Let us now focus, in a more systematic way, on these connections. I, therefore, turn to the realm of political sciences and, especially, to the analogous issue of the channels that link political parties to voters. After all, the Catholic Church is not the only organisation with difficulties in reaching and binding a following. This has become a common problem for all major organisations in advanced modernity, for big corporations and banks, for trade unions, and, not in the least, for political parties. Political scientists have taken up this issue. The German-American political scientist Herbert Kitschelt[29] has devised an analytical catalogue of the ways political parties in the West may connect to citizens. I'll apply his scheme to our problem.

Kitschelt distinguishes between two fundamental classes of linkage types: affective and instrumental. Affective bonds can be created and reproduced in three ways: through common traits (ethnicity, gender, language, region), through party identification (tradition, collective mobilisation, corporate symbols, and narrative), and through charismatic leadership. There are also three types of instrumental linkages: voters may vote for a party because it is considered to be delivering desired valence goods (goods for everyone, like economic growth or crime reduction), highly attractive club goods or positional goods (like lower taxes for investors), or because a party builds upon clientelistic relations (goods for individuals or small groups, like providing contracts for particular companies).

Let us apply this analytical scheme of six possible types of linkages to the Catholic Church and its relations with the faithful. I start with the affective types of linkages.

1. Nowadays, affective linkages through common traits are pertinent only in the case of Catholic ethnic migrants and their migrant parishes. In these cases, the shared culture provides an easy platform for the building up of connections – but hinders, at the same time, their integration in the indigenous churches. In the past, the Catholic Church was often invoked in

[29] H. Kitschelt, "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities," *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 6-7 (2000): 845-79; H. Kitschelt, *Latin American Party Systems*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 18-20.

an identity struggle which pitted whole regions against others, for example, the Catholic South and Southeast in the Netherlands against the Protestant Centre, or Catholic Poland against Protestant Sweden and Prussia and Orthodox Russia. This was even true for encounters between civilisations, e.g. during the Crusades, the Latin *christianitas* against the Muslim world. The 'culture wars' and the emergence of Catholic sub-societies in the 19th and early 20th centuries exhibit the continuing force of common traits in the first modernity. However, after 1960, trait linkages are no longer pervasive in the West. A residual role is still performed, though dwindling, in a number of countries (e.g. Catholic Poland). Only in contested territories, like in Northern Ireland or in the former Yugoslavia, is it still a lively identity marker.

2. Church identification by tradition was all-dominant in the past, but is, like in voting behaviour, declining in our age of volatility and choice. In the past, adherence to the Catholic Church was passed on from generation to generation, first of all within the family, second, through local or regional tradition, and, third, if possible, through the state. Once Catholicism had been established, there were thus few converts. The new ideal in advanced modernity, however, according to which each individual has to lead a personal, authentic life, questions adherence by tradition and demands that adherence to the Catholic Church be a conscious, individual choice. The demand is no less for the offspring of Catholics. Here, family traditions are still playing a role, but only in so far as the Catholic Church is able to make a lasting impression in the lead up to the choice of the individual person. A lasting impression often fails and a great many born Catholics leave the Church. On the other hand, an influx of converts becomes a possibility. Especially between 1800 and 1960, identification with the Church was also enhanced through frequent collective mobilisations. A variety of religious manifestations (Eucharist masses, 'rites de passage', processions, and pilgrimages) and an elaborated associational world buttressed identification. Moreover, in times of conflict, the Catholic Church was able to raise the rank and file in great numbers (cf. the culture wars at the end of the 19th century). The dualist corporate narrative, pitting "the cause of God" against "the terrible conspiracy of impious men",[30] equally bolstered identification by the faithful with the Church. After 1960, the forces of collective mobilisation and of the dualist narrative waned, but did not disappear. The Catholic Church is still strong in collective mobilisations (e.g. World Youth Days, papal voyages). The Catholic corporate narrative is still highly recognisable as well – and is retaining in conservative circles also a clearly dualistic nature – but without the former large-scale appeal.

3. Charismatic linkages are vital at the start of a religious movement. This was also the case with Christianity: undoubtedly, Jesus had great charismatic gifts. Nevertheless, as Max Weber pointed out already a century ago, early Christianity, in its drive for institutionalisation, very soon made a

[30] Gregorius XVI, "Mirari Vos," par. 6 resp. par. 1.

move away from the non-transferable qualities of personal charisma into the solid ground of charisma of the office. Personal charisma, joined to the office, was never dead though. It became even more salient after 1800. From Pius IX onwards, the popes were known and revered throughout the Catholic world. Since then, the charismatic authority of popes is, in part, staged. It is bestowed even on popes with little personal charisma (e.g. Benedict XVI). The combination of both personal and office charisma continues, however, to be potent. John Paul II and now Francis are obvious examples.

As is clear, affective bonds between the Church and the faithful were, and still are, though less than in the past, of major importance. Similar conclusions can be drawn for the instrumental class of linkage types.

1. Clientelistic linkages were in the past very significant. The clergy were, at one time and up until 1960, all-important power brokers. Nowadays, this is no longer the case.

2. 'Club goods' linkages were of major importance after 1800, when the Catholic Church was offering the Catholic faithful the benefits of modernity (education, health care, cultural goods, participation in politics, interest representation, and so on). After 1960, this type of bond declined due to the Church's loss of most of these functions. Where Catholic schools, hospitals, political parties, or interest organisations continued to exist, they had often already ceased for quite some time to function exclusively for Catholics. Yet, in numerous instances, Catholic social organisations are still functioning as channels linking people to the Catholic world, albeit in cursory ways.[31] In a number of non-Western Catholic churches, particularly in the 'failed states' of Africa (as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Catholic club goods are still vital for the population. In the West, also, smaller religious groups, such as migrant churches, provide club goods (e.g. job coaching and allocation, helping migrants with their papers and their integration into the host society). Moreover, in Western countries with few welfare state facilities, like the United States, so-called faith-based organisations have re-emerged as important civil carriers.[32] In sum, there is still a potential for 'club goods' linkages offering particular gains, but this is less prominent than in the past.

3. 'Valence goods' linkages result from the promise and offer of goods benefiting all people. In the past, the Catholic Church perceived itself as the institution *par excellence* offering universal social goods to society (e.g. ensuring social order, inculcating the right values and decent behaviour

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[31] B. Fix and E. Fix, *Kirche Und Wohlfahrtsstaat. Soziale Arbeit Kirchlicher Wohlfahrtsorganisationen Im Westeuropäischen Vergleich* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Lambertus, 2005); K. Gabriel, *Caritas Und Sozialstaat Unter Veränderungsdruck* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2007).

[32] R. Wuthnow, *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

in all persons). However, today, as a minority church, it can no longer offer these goods as valence goods in a credible way, since the claim of offering these social goods to all people presupposes an institution that is acting as a sacred canopy on behalf of society. Nevertheless, the promise and offer of universal goods has not lost importance. After all, the core of Christianity, i.e. the promise of salvation in God and Christ, is a universal good, a promise for everyone. But it has to be translated and made effective in order for people to want to engage in the Church in the expectation of living a good and holy life.

CHRISTIAN FULFILMENT OF LIFE

Looking at the overall picture, it is quite clear that the Church has lost most of its former binding potential on its faithful. Two crucial affective linking mechanisms, namely, common traits and adherence by tradition, were most salient even in the recent past but are no longer so. Collective mobilisations and a corporate narrative retain some value but touch hearts and minds less so than in previous times. On the other hand, charismatic relations joined to the office of popes – and, to a far lesser extent, bishops – have gained in importance in modernity. Regarding instrumental linkages, the state of affairs is similar. Clientelistic linkages have, except in migrant parishes and for marginalised people, disappeared. Linkages springing from the promise of 'club goods' for Catholics – making the benefits of modernity available for Catholics – are still woven, but with far less intensity (again with the exceptions mentioned). This means that the Church nowadays is left to make its stance predominantly with its potential of 'valence goods' in the religious sphere. But, as religion has become a matter of personal choice and one framed in an ethics of authenticity, universal goods in general, including the promise of salvation, are now phrased in terms of personal fulfilment (Taylor, 1999). The outlook of leading a good life, a fulfilled life 'in God and in Christ' is what could be attracting people nowadays to Christianity. If the Catholic Church wants to gain new relevance, it is here – guiding people towards contact with God in order to live a fulfilled life – that convincing ideas and programs (in the form of spirituality, rituals, collective activities, social action, etc.) should be developed. However, viewed from this perspective, it is rather odd to find that the Church is, in effect, raising the conditions for full participation in a number of rituals, thereby turning what could be universal goods into club goods. Examples of this are denying communion to divorcees and non-married couples in a society with fewer first marriages and high rates of divorce, or the decision of the German Conference of Bishops in 2012 not to provide sacraments to people who do not pay their church tax (*'Kirchensteuer'*). Whether the Church will be able to reach people with the 'valence good' of the Gospel is, in my opinion, dependent on two conditions: creating a fitting religious offer and imagining the good life and the good society, which is where the *magisterium* comes in.

Let us first look at the religious offer. As has been indicated (see above § 4), after 1960, the religious offer declined because most old forms (sodalities, processions, parish activities, etc.) lost appeal and were not replaced by new forms that carried equivalent attraction. The Catholic Church in advanced modernity thus faces the challenge of elaborating, in line with the Catholic tradition, a new religious offer in such a way that it meets the cravings of contemporary people to lead a fulfilled life, bearing in mind that they can walk away at any moment. The elaboration of such a new, fitting religious offer is a huge task. It is, above all, a creative task and one that cannot simply be promulgated from on high because it has to build upon countless experiments, mostly from below, from which a small number of successful performances can be selected for fine-tuning and wider dissemination. To be fair, there has been widespread innovation, even after the waves of innovation of the 1960s had withered away (World Youth Days, new *movimenti*, spirituality centres, etc.),[33] but this has not been enough and what has been created has only had limited appeal. The Church's reluctance towards innovation and experimenting is certainly restraining the renewal. The really critical difficulty, though, is of another order: Will it be possible at all, given the absence of a Catholic state and (sub-)society and given the fact that secular goods nowadays can at most be provided peripherally, to attract major layers of the population with only a religious offer? After all, many seem to do well without religion or, at least, without demanding institutional religion.

Second, next to offering the opportunity of a religious practice, which promises to bring 'God's bliss and grace' into the personal life of the believer, comes the inspiring and, at the same time, reasonable imagining of the good life and the good society, and its intrinsic relations with God and Christianity. This is the imagining of what Taylor and Carroll call 'a Catholic modernity'.[34] Here, reflection, theory, theology, and the *magisterium* are at stake. With regard to the *magisterium*, however, a major stain becomes manifest: the teaching of the Church seems often to have been triggered and directed by negative energy, by apologetics, by the drive to demarcate oneself from heresies, to suppress errors. Gregory XVI and Pius IX seem, at times, only to issue magisterial documents when they want to suppress ideas and movements – culminating in the publication by Pius

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[33] For an overview in Britain, see James Sweeney, "Catholicism in Britain: A Church in Search of Its Way," in *Towards a New Catholic Church in Advanced Modernity*, ed. S. Hellemans and J. Wissink (Vienna and Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012), 147-76.

[34] Charles Taylor, "A Catholic Modernity," in *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture*, ed. J.L. Heft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13-37; A.J. Carroll, "A Catholic Program for Advanced Modernity," in *Towards a New Catholic Church in Advanced Modernity*, ed. S. Hellemans and J. Wissink (Vienna and Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012), 51-77.

IX of the *Syllabus Errorum* in 1864. It is true that many later documents demonstrate a more positive attitude and present uplifting visions. Nevertheless, the negative interventions and imperative rulings remain frequent to this day, with the result that the Catholic Church in general and the *magisterium* in particular are, in the public mind – and also in the minds of many Catholics – nearly equated with ill dogmatism and insensitive condemnations. Since the conditions of advanced modernity are such that the Church can no longer enforce its will, it will have to be more prudent with bans and rulings and it will need to focus its teaching on the intimate positive relation between Christianity and the fulfilment of life. It is on this latter relation that Catholic social teaching is welcomed by so many, and also by those outside the Church, and that the documents of the Second Vatican Council are still regarded as a source of inspiration. Only if the *magisterium* and the Church appear to be conducive for people to lead a fulfilled life can it hope to regain some degree of authority. Vice versa, so long as the *magisterium* cannot shed its negative reputation, its teachings will not be received as inspiring.

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